



# *Iowa Outdoors*

**Iowa Department of Natural Resources**  
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**Dec. 6, 2005**

1. Snow Cover is Slowing Ice Formation on Area Lakes
2. Trees and Shrubs Vital to Wildlife Winter Survival
3. Natural Resource Commission to Meet Thursday in Des Moines

## **SNOW COVER IS SLOWING ICE FORMATION ON AREA LAKES**

DES MOINES – Lake and streams are freezing over in many parts of Iowa, but ice conditions are still considered marginal over much of the state. Even though cold weather is predicted for the rest of the week, the snow on top of the ice is preventing ice growth.

“Clear Lake is not ready for ice fishing, and the smaller lakes in the area are marginal, but improving. The best advice is to give it a few more days for the cold weather to do its thing,” said Jim Wahl, fisheries biologist at Clear Lake.

In northwest Iowa, the cold weather is having a hard time growing ice.

“It (Spirit Lake) froze over, then it snowed, and you can’t believe how well that snow insulates the ice. We only have about an inch to an inch and a half of ice in Anglers Bay,” said Jim Christianson, fisheries biologist at Sprit Lake.

Even on smaller area lakes – Trumbull and Virgin – there was not enough ice for ice fishing.

“I know people are excited and anxious to get out, but they should stay off the ice,” Christianson said. The Iowa Department of Natural Resources recommends a minimum of four inches of ice for general use. Ice should be at least five inches thick to support a snowmobile, at least 7-1/2 inches thick to support a car weighing no more than 2 tons, gross weight.

Test the ice early and often with a spud bar or ice auger when heading out, because ice thickness is not uniform on any lake or stream. Avoid off-colored or slushy

ice as those are signs of weakness. Trees or stumps sticking through the ice can act as heat conductors and make the ice weak.

**For more information, contact Mick Klemesrud at 515-281-8653.**

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## **TREES AND SHRUBS VITAL TO WILDLIFE WINTER SURVIVAL**

With the typical Iowa winter of subzero temperatures and strong northerly winds, the benefits of trees and woody shrubs to wildlife and songbirds can not be overemphasized. Trees, especially conifers, provide critical winter cover for many of Iowa's game and non-game species.

If densely planted, evergreen or conifer trees act as "Wildlife Hotels" by greatly reducing wind chill temperatures and allowing wildlife to conserve their body heat. In addition, evergreens allow wildlife hiding cover from predators. Evergreen trees ideally suited to Iowa's growing conditions are white pine, red pine, jack pine, redcedar, Norway spruce and white spruce.

Broadleaf shrubs and small trees with dense low hanging branches also provide winter cover for wildlife and provide winter food sources. Shrubs and small trees such as native serviceberry, gray, silky or redbud dogwood, chokecherry, wild plum, elderberry, arrowwood, nannyberry, buttonbush and highbush cranberry are excellent choices for Iowa wildlife.

As the snow becomes deeper and blows into drifts, upright woody vegetation will provide winter food, browse, and cover which is often critical to wildlife winter survival. Mast or acorns from native bur, red, swamp white and white oaks are critical for wildlife to "fatten up" for the winter.

To provide winter cover in future years, trees and shrub species can be ordered right now in time for planting this April and May. The Iowa Department of Natural Resources State Forest Nursery in Ames sells conservation seedlings trees and shrubs for wildlife plantings that are 8 to 24 inches tall for \$0.25 to \$0.45 per seedling, with a minimum order of 500 seedlings. For smaller plantings, the 20 seedling Songbird packet is available at \$20 and various 200 seedling wildlife habitat packets are available at \$90 with smaller areas to plant.

To order conservation trees and shrubs or for more information, call the State Forest Nursery at 1-800-865-2477 or consider ordering online with your credit card by going to [www.iowadnr.com/forestry/](http://www.iowadnr.com/forestry/). Gift certificates for the holidays are also available.

If you have an area of open land, consider a tree and shrub planting to help Iowa's wildlife species this coming spring and give wildlife the "gift that keeps growing."

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## **NATURAL RESOURCE COMMISSION TO MEET THURSDAY IN DES MOINES**

DES MOINES – The Natural Resource Commission (NRC) of the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) will meet at 8:30 a.m., Thursday, Dec. 8, in the fourth floor conference room, Wallace State Office Bldg., in Des Moines. The meeting is open to the public.

Members of the NRC are Joan Schneider, Randy Duncan, Carol Kramer, Richard Francisco, Janice Marcantonio, Lennis Moore and Liz Garst. The DNR Director is Jeffrey Vonk.

The following is the agenda for the December meeting.

- Approve Agenda
- Approve Minutes of Nov. 10 Meeting
- Director's Remarks
- Construction Projects
- Land Acquisition
  - Barringer Slough, Clay County – Swan
  - Ryan Lake Wildlife Management Area, Emmet County – Paulson
  - Cedar Rock, Buchanan County – Cannon
  - Diamond Lake, Dickinson County – Michael and Anita Mayou
- Meeting Dates and Locations for 2006
- Management Agreement with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service – Pine Creek, Clayton County
- Cooperative Agreement with Duck Unlimited
- Conservation and Recreation Donations
- DNR State Land Timber Harvest Review Process
- Mines of Spain 28E Agreement
- River Otter and Bobcat Population Status
- Notice of Intended Action – Chapter 40, Boating Speed and Distance Zoning
- General Discussion
- Items for Next Meeting, Feb. 9, in Des Moines

**For more information, contact Karyn Stone at 515-281-8650.**

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